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MARGINALIA

A Slavonic Version of John Cantacuzenus's *Against Islam*

C. J. G. TURNER

IT is not generally recognised that among the many medieval Slavonic versions of Greek works there exists one of the anti-Islamic writings of the Byzantine Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus. Yet a fine copy of such a translation is provided by one of the manuscripts which formerly belonged to Dr Moses Gaster and are at present in the John Rylands Library (Manchester). It is now no. 2082 in the Gaster collection of the Library.¹ Written on paper of approximately 20.5 × 14.3 cm., the manuscript runs to 245 folios with 21 lines per page. Dr Gaster's handwritten catalogue and correspondence with experts in the Bodleian Library (the latter attached to the front of the codex) indicate that they attributed the manuscript to the 16th century, describing its binding as 'extraordinary' and 'not later than 1550'.

The heading of the work tells us that 'the present work was written by the pious and Christ-loving Emperor John Cantacuzenus, whose monastic name was Joasaph'.² Born into an aristocratic family towards the end of the 13th century, John Cantacuzenus soon attained high office, became in effect prime minister of the Empire in his thirties and in 1341 had himself proclaimed emperor. He abdicated at the end of 1354. It was yet another time of crisis for Byzantium, in which civil war involving rival personalities was exacerbated by theological disputes, social strife and the Black Death. John Cantacuzenus was associated with the aristocratic party in politics and with the Palamite party in theology. But it was also a time when external dangers to the empire were far from absent: the Serbian realm of Stephen Dušan (who had himself crowned 'Emperor of Serbia and Rumania' in 1345) reached its fullest extent at this period, but proved ephemeral; more fateful for its future consequences was John Cantacuzenus's employment of Turkish military aid and the fact that the Turks had by the time of his abdication established their first permanent base in Europe at Gallipoli.

In 1354 John Cantacuzenus became the monk Joasaph. But his sons became governors of the Morea, and he himself enjoyed considerable authority in fact if not in theory. In preference to retiring to Athos, he seems to have spent most of his remaining life (he died in 1383) in Constantinople, where he was sufficiently reconciled to his former rival,

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¹ I should like to express my thanks to the Librarian of the John Rylands Library for permission to study the Gaster manuscript, and to Dr V. M. Du Feu for advice and guidance.

² For the main secondary literature on Cantacuzenus see: Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, Berlin, 1958, pp. 321–2; H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Munich, 1959, pp. 731–2; D.M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100–1460*, Washington, 1968; G. Weiss, *Joannes Kantakouzenos—Aristokrat, Staatsmann, Kaiser und Mönch—in der Gesellschaftsentwicklung von Byzanz im 14. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden, 1969.

John V Palaeologus, to be used by him for essentially diplomatic purposes.³ He was thus only semi-retired when he wrote his *Histories* (ca. 1368–9), as well as various works of Palamite theology and his series of four *Apologies* and four *Orations* against Islam.

The *Apologies* and *Orations* in fact form one work whose Greek text is reproduced in Migne's *Patrologia*⁴ from the edition by John Oporinus (Basel, 1543) of a copy made by Manuel Tzykandyles.⁵ They survive in numerous manuscripts of which the earliest dated (1373) is the Vaticanus graecus 686.⁶ It was long thought that the Parisinus graecus 1242 was an autograph, but Mercati's doubts about this have been confirmed by Politis.⁷ There are also numerous copies of a 17th-century version in demotic Greek made on the orders of Basil, Prince of Moldavia.⁸ The date of composition of the original is generally assumed to be 1360, but this is based on an emendation in the text (Migne 389: Gaster 15), where Cantacuzenus says that 'it is now 1360 years since the crucifixion'. Since this would give a date after the author's death, Güterbock⁹ suggested that 'σαρκώσεως' (incarnation) should be substituted for 'σταυρώσεως'.

The work¹⁰ takes as its point of departure a letter written by a Turk, called Sampsates of Isfahan, to a converted Turk, called Meletius, attempting to disabuse him of his new-found beliefs. While it is probable that this is more than a literary device, it is also true that Cantacuzenus used it as such a device by extending his work beyond the normal dimensions of a reply to a personal plea for help. In modern terms, a dialogue between the rival ideologies of East and West is converted into a diatribe by one of the parties. Cantacuzenus's first task, however, in the *Apologies* is to defend Christian doctrine against the objections of the Moslem and to maintain its credibility. In the *Orations* he tends rather to raise, in his turn, objec-

³ See J. Meyendorff, 'Projets de Concile Oecuménique en 1367: Un dialogue inédit entre Jean Cantacuzène et le légat Paul' (*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 14, Washington, 1960, pp. 147–77); Lj. Maksimović, 'Politička uloga Jovana Kantakuzina posle abdikacije (1354–83)' (*Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 9, Belgrade, 1966, pp. 119–93).

⁴ J. P. Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus. Series graeco-latina*, 154, Paris, 1866, 372–692.

⁵ Presumably the manuscript of the Zürich Stadtbibliothek 170 (C 27), for which see H. Omont, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs des bibliothèques de Suisse* (from the *Centralblatt für Bibliotheksvesen*, Leipzig, 1866), pp. 58–9, and L. C. Mohlberg, *Katalog der Handschriften der Zentralbibliothek Zürich, I: Mittelalterliche Handschriften*, Zürich, 1951, p. 22.

⁶ See A. Turyn, *Codices Graeci Vaticani saeculi XIII et XIV scripti annorumque notis instructi*, Rome, 1964, p. 167; the scribe was John Pepagomenus II.

⁷ See G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV*, Rome, 1931, p. 274; L. Politis, 'Jean-Joasaph Cantacuzène fut-il copiste?' (*Revue des Études Byzantines*, 14, Paris, 1956, pp. 195–9).

⁸ See N. Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance*, Bucharest, 1935, p. 168. V. Cândea ('Une version roumaine du XVII siècle de l'Apologie contre Mahomet de Jean Cantacuzène', *Revue des Etudes Sud-est Européennes*, 4, Bucharest, 1966, pp. 232–7) has found also a reference to a Rumanian version in the late 17th century and notes the wide dispersion of the Oporinus edition and the existence in 16th-century Transylvania of a Slavonic version of the paraphrase of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* which was formerly attributed to Cantacuzenus (but see D. M. Nicol, 'A Paraphrase of the Nicomachean Ethics attributed to Cantacuzene', *Byzantinoslavica*, 29, Prague, 1968, pp. 1–16).

⁹ C. Güterbock, *Der Islam im Lichte der byzantinischen Polemik*, Berlin, 1912, pp. 51–2.

¹⁰ For general discussions see Güterbock, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–61; H. Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, Rome, 1937, pp. 54–8; E. Trapp, (ed.) *Manuel II Palaiologos: Dialoge mit einem 'Perser'*, Vienna, 1966, Introduction pp. 44–8.

tions against Islamic beliefs. Particularly in this latter part he is noticeably dependent on the translation by his friend and former minister, Demetrius Cydones, of the *Refutation of the Koran* by Ricoldo da Monte Croce.¹¹

A Middle Bulgarian Church Slavonic version of Cantacuzenus' work *Against Islam* occupies the first 244 folios of the Gaster codex (*Apology I f. 1^r incipit: Πατριμενιδης ηγετος επηλητης; Oratio I f. 167^v incipit: Εγκεκομογη πρεσβος λογιουμογη*). But on its final pages we find two smaller items, still in Slavonic. Of these the latter (ff. 244^v-245^r *incipit: Не въкъмъ къде ут обвихъ*) turns out to be simply the opening of Cantacuzenus's work *Against the Jews*, written under the name of 'Christodoulus'.¹² This work has not yet been edited; but it is preserved in several manuscripts, of which one in Leiden contains a 15th-century illustration of a debate between John Cantacuzenus and a Jew.¹³ The way in which our manuscript comes to a halt after only a score of lines may indicate that it was taken from a copy that had already been split into anti-Islamic and anti-Judaic sections, leaving only the beginning of the latter attached to the former.

The other item (ff. 244^{r-v} *incipit: Гојжие дръжавници*) consists of the verses in praise of Cantacuzenus by Simeon Atumanus, (Latin) Archbishop of Thebes.¹⁴ The Greek text of these has been published more than once.¹⁵ They cannot have been composed before 1366, when Simeon was promoted from an Italian bishopric to the archiepiscopal see of Thebes, and they may well have been written in about 1374, when Simeon was sent on a papal mission for which he was recommended to, among others, John Cantacuzenus by Pope Gregory XI. The verses are preserved in manuscripts in Venice, Madrid, Leiden, the Vatican, Athos and Zürich, usually together with the *Against Islam* and in every case with the *Against the Jews*; it is noticeable that Simeon was a Hebraist and active in cities with large Jewish communities, so that he may well have had a particular interest in this latter work. But in only two of these manuscripts, the Vaticanus graecus 688 and that of the Zürich Stadtbibliothek 170 (C 27), do the works appear in the same order as in the Slavonic version; and of these the Vatican text omits sections¹⁶ that are present in the version. There is therefore some possibility that the same Zürich manuscript on which the Greek edition is based, also provided the (indirect) source for this version. It was copied by Manuel Tzycandyles in Constantinople in March 1374, i.e. at the time and in the place that Simeon was conducting

¹¹ Migne *op. cit.*, 154, 1032-52. See Trapp, *ibid.*

¹² That Cantacuzenus used this as a kind of nom de plume was noted by K. Krumacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, Munich, 1897, p. 300.

¹³ See K. A. de Meyer, *Bibliotheca Universitatis Leidensis: Codices Manuscripti*, VIII: *Codices Bibliothecae Publicae Graeci*, Leiden, 1965, pp. 60-2.

¹⁴ For Simeon see especially G. Fedalto, *Simeone Atumano, monaco di Studio, arcivescovo latino di Tebe (secolo XIV)*, Brescia, 1968; also G. Mercati, *Se la versione dall'ebraico del Codice Veneto Greco VII sia di Simeone Atumano arcivescovo di Tebe*, Rome, 1916; Beck, *Kirche . . .*, pp. 791-2; and A. K. Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben des Johannes Laskaris Kalopheros*, Wiesbaden, 1969, pp. 115-7.

¹⁵ They are printed in full by L. Allatius, *De Simeonum scriptis diatriba*, Paris, 1664, p. 203 (reprinted in J. Echard, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*, I, Paris, 1719, p. 737); by S. Eustatiades and Arcadios, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts in the Library of the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mt. Athos*, Cambridge, Mass., 1924, p. 68; and by Fedalto, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-4; part is also reprinted in Migne *op. cit.*, 153, 9-10.

¹⁶ See R. Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci*, III, Rome, 1950, p. 150.

negotiations on behalf of the Pope with Byzantine representatives who included Cantacuzenus.

A swift comparison of the Slavonic version of the *Against Islam* with the edition of the Greek text leads to the conclusion that the translation is largely literal: for example, the Greek phrases ‘ἔστιν ὅτε’ and ‘φέρε δὴ λοιπόν’ are rendered literally as ‘*и с(т) и рдя*’ and ‘*принеси и(ы)и к прочек*’ (*passim*). Indeed in places the translation of even larger units is so literal that it becomes virtually incomprehensible without reference to the original. Blatant errors of translation are not absent, such as on several occasions when the Greek particle *ἄν* (accompanying the optative) is rendered by *аще* (i.e. a translation of *ἄν*=*έσθι*). But more common is syntactical confusion resulting from a partial imitation of the Greek construction: an example of this occurs early in the version (Migne 373: Gaster 2), where ‘περὶ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ ἔθνους τούτου’ is rendered by ‘*о законк и языка сего*’, in which the genitive required by the Greek preposition is carried over in the second noun into the Slavonic version although the Slavonic preposition requires a different case. Case, number and person are all at times altered. Occasionally errors are corrected by erasures (and a few folios, e.g. 217^r–218^r, even seem to have been rewritten) or by interlinear additions. Other linguistic peculiarities include: a weakening of connections due to the relative paucity of connecting particles in Slavonic; the rendering of Greek participles by Slavonic indicatives, and vice versa; a singular verb after a neuter plural subject (‘*тълеснаа бв прнемле*’ [Gaster 183]), not in imitation of the Greek; and at least two cases, doubtless scribal errors, of what, in a Russian context, one would have called *akanje*. Among the loan-words it may be noted that the masculine form *певръ* (from Greek *πεύκη*=pine-tree), which according to Vasmer¹⁷ is found only in Russian Church Slavonic, appears here in a South Slavonic text (Gaster 125 and 126; in quotation from Isaiah 60, 13).

The most peculiar feature, however, of the version is that two lengthy passages appear twice over: the end of *Apology* IV, the summary of contents of the *Orations* and the beginning of *Oration* I (Migne 581–93) are inserted in the Gaster text at ff. 48–54; and these are immediately followed by the whole of *Oration* IV (Migne 672–92) on ff. 54–66. With the exception of the summary of contents of the *Orations* (Migne 584–9) these reappear in their due places later in the version. The duplicate versions are close in word-order and lexicon, but are far from identical (e.g. with regard to omissions).

Omissions in fact form a serious fault in the translation, amounting on some pages to about a quarter of the text and extending to as much as twelve lines at a time (Migne 672: Gaster 228). The reasons for such omissions are various: linguistic differences, such as the avoidance of pleonastic synonyms which abound in the Greek (e.g. ‘δ... νόμος καὶ ἡ διαθήκη’ is rendered simply by ‘*законъ*’ [Migne 425: Gaster 40]; and ‘*ψεῦδος*’ is rendered simply by ‘*льжъ*’ [Migne 605: Gaster 179]); deliberate shortening, such as the omission or reduction of supporting quotations

¹⁷ M. Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg, 1953–8, II, p. 329.

(e.g. Migne 501: Gaster 107; and Migne 633: Gaster 200-1); technical, such as the omission in the Slavonic of a verb repeated in the Greek, or of one line (e.g. 'οἱ δὲ . . . καὶ ἄνθρωπος' [Migne 496: Gaster 102]) or obvious cases of haplography; and sheer inadvertence, sometimes ruining the sense by the omission (or insertion) of a negative (which is more frequent than one might expect) or even the omission of the main clause (e.g. 'κατηγορούμεθα καὶ τοῦτο' [Migne 529: Gaster 126]).

Additions, on the other hand, are nugatory. For the most part they are simple cases of diplography; and the one passage ('ζρι . . . Α(Θ)ΥΧΑ' [Migne 468: Gaster 84]) that seems at first to be an appreciable addition turns out to be basically of the same sort. Other additions are virtually negligible, being given either for greater clarity (e.g. the substitution of a Slavonic noun for a Greek pronoun) or in order to summarise or connect where a longer passage has been omitted.

The Gaster manuscript, however, is definitely not the archetype of the version. Many of its errors can be attributed without hesitation to the actual process of translation: thus η̄ is often rendered by αψε (for εῑ), and οὖν by ΗΗ (for οὐκ); more priceless is the rendering of the phrase 'στόμα πρὸς οὖς' by the incomprehensible 'ε οὔστα κε ηημιχε' (Migne 584: Gaster 49), where οὖς (ear) is plainly confused with the relative pronoun οὗς. But not a few of its errors can with no less hesitation be attributed to the process of copying: thus not only do we find ἀλλά often rendered by ΗΕ or ΗΗ (for ΙΚ) and ξτι by αψε or ΕΧΕ (for ΕΨΕ), and the (abbreviated) prefix ΒΛΓΡ- substituted for ΒΓΡ-; but, more gloriously, τὸ ἐνύπνιον is rendered by ΣΚΔ instead of ΣΗΝΗ (Migne 416: Gaster 31), περιπατοῦντας by χοταψιχ (Migne 577: Gaster 164) instead of χοδλψиχ and even Σαδ (the title of a section of the Koran) more than once by сам Δ(ави)дъ (e.g. Migne 585: Gaster 51). Moreover, the version occasionally seems to support the rendering of the Latin translation provided in the Oporinus/Migne edition as against the Greek text; but this paradoxical phenomenon is certainly due simply to misprints in the latter. Examples of this are provided by ΗΑΜ (Gaster 48), where the Latin has nobis and the Greek ίμιν (Migne 437) instead of ήμιν; and Μ(Θ)ΛΗΤΕΚ (Gaster 57), where the Latin has voti and the Greek ψυχήν (Migne 680) instead of εὐχήν.

The translation was probably made in the 15th century: this has been suggested to me on linguistic grounds; and, as we have seen, this codex has been attributed to the early 16th century. The codex apparently had links, at least later, with the Rumanian area: not only was the family of the Cantacuzeni prominent there, especially in the 17th century, but, more specifically, among the few inscriptions in the codex the earliest dated, found on its final page and dated 1664, is in Rumanian Cyrillic.¹⁸

While a critical edition of the Greek text is a *desideratum*, one cannot but conclude that the value for this of the Slavonic version would be minimal. Its value as another document for Slavonic philology would appear to be greater.

¹⁸ Dr Gaster was himself born and bred in Rumania.